LIBRARY ASSISTANT

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS (Section of the Library Association)

HON. EDITOR: FRANK M. GARDNER (Willesden Public Libraries)

No. 417

is

en

ps ar

W

of ast ing

ile

are

MAY, 1934

Page 128

Contents

ANNOUNCE	MENTS				٠	•		٠	٠			Page	114
PRONOUNC	EMENTS	٠					٠			٠		Page	116
REPLANNIN	G LOND	-		LIBI					E			Page	117
THE AMERIC	CAN SCE			n A						٠	٠	Page	122
DIVISIONS		٠			•							Page	126
NEW MEMB	ERS		٠	٠	٠				٠			Page	127
COUNCIL N	NOTES .					٠	٠		•	٠	•	Page	127

CORRESPONDENCE

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE next meeting of the section will be held at West Ham Central Library, Water Lane, Stratford, E.16, on Wednesday, 9th May, 1934, at 3 p.m. The speaker at this meeting will be Mr. W. S. Haugh, F.L.A., of Liverpool Public Libraries. Mr. Haugh is the nominee of the North-Western Division, and the title of his paper is "Public Assistance,"

The Chair will be taken by the Chairman of the West Ham Public Libraries Committee (Councillor E. C. Cannon), and after the meeting tea will be provided by the West Ham staff. All members intending to be present should send their names to Mr. W. C. Pugsley, Branch Library, High Road, Chadwell Heath, Romford, by Monday, 7th May.

The meeting should be a very attractive one, and it is to be hoped that a large number of members will be present to welcome Mr. Haugh, who is making a long and tedious journey to address us. The opportunity of inspecting the West Ham Central Library, which has recently undergone extensive alterations, is also one that should not be missed.

Access is gained by the L.N.E.R. from Liverpool Street to Maryland Point, or by the following tram and omnibus services: Tram No. 63; 'Buses 25, 26, 86, 125, 126, 186.

Members are reminded that the annual meeting is being held at Derby on 13th June. A full and interesting programme is being arranged, of which particulars will be given next month. In the meantime, will members note the date?

The meeting at Chaucer House on 11th April, when Mr. Coult gave the third paper in the series, "The Library and the community," must have been one of the most interesting held within those sacred walls. Mr. Coult's subject was, of course, "The Library and the proletariat," and he dealt with it faithfully, at length, and with much verve. His main theme was that the proletariat are unable to make full use of libraries because of physical fatigue, bad economic status, and the mental strain of poverty, but he elaborated his argument with many useful departures from this main theme. An already small audience was depleted by several people leaving on the completion of the paper (we should like to think they were expressing disapproval of Mr. Coult, but fear they just had trains to catch), but the remainder seized the opportunity for discussion eagerly, without any of the soul-shattering silences

between speakers one dreads. The wide problems raised by the speaker gave everyone an opportunity to ride his favourite hobby-horse (including the Editor), and the high quality of the speeches was possibly due to missionary fervour. The chairman, Mr. Gurner Jones, ruled the arena with his usual aplomb, though we noticed a mild astonishment on his face at some of the views expressed, and managed to keep the discussion within some bounds.

tral

34,

igh,

the

e."

ries

be sent

oad,

nat a

o is

gone

land

hich

note

e the

have

oult's

with

t the

tigue,

ed his

ready

on of

f Mr.

ences

Mr. Coult's paper will be published shortly in The LIBRARY ASSISTANT, and it is to be hoped that further discussion will ensue.

The Francis J. Thacker Scholarship, to the value of £15, open to members of the Birmingham and District Branch of the Library Association, will be awarded this year for the best thesis of not more than 5,000 words on "Practical training of the library assistant apart from professional examinations: past methods and suggestions for the future."

Intending entrants may obtain further particulars from the Hon. Secretary of the Birmingham and District Branch.

A complete catalogue of the A.A.L. Library has now been printed, and is available to members on remitting 3d. in stamps to Mr. S. W. Martin, Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road, London, S.E.24.

A Conference of the London and Home Counties Branch will be held at Margate from 1st June to 3rd June. We understand that visitors will be welcome at all meetings, and judging from the attractive programme that has been arranged, A.A.L. members who are able to attend should have a fruitful weekend. A.A.L. members desiring to be present should notify Mr. K. G. Hunt, Public Library, Mitcham, of their intention as early as possible, in order that advantage may be taken of the Margate Corporation's offer to provide pass cards for the various facilities. The Headquarters Hotel will be the Fort Paragon Hotel, Cliftonville, and it is hoped that most, if not all, of those attending will stay there. Rooms should be booked immediately. The full period of the Conference is from Friday evening, 1st June, to Monday morning, 4th June, but those who can only make a shorter visit will of course be equally welcome.

In reply to several enquiries, the A.A.L. is not organizing courses to prepare students for the new preliminary examinations.

The Library Assistant PRONOUNCEMENTS

IBRARIANS will have been interested in a recent letter in The Times Literary Supplement from Mr. Berwick Sayers protesting against the iniquitous practice of publishers in using important illustrations and maps as end-papers to books. From junior assistants, called over the coals for pasting a date label over an end-paper map, to librarians forced to write to publishers for extra copies of illustrations for binding purposes, we all suffer from this silly fault, and Mr. Sayers is to be congratulated on his protest. But publishers are hardened people, and it is to be feared that a single letter in the T.L.S. will not do a great deal of good. It is wrong that a single person should be left to fight alone on a question which should be taken up by the profession as a whole. Concerted protest, or even more violent action, would probably have some effect.

A similar matter has recently been the subject of discussion in the Library Association Record. Mr. W. R. Cunningham, of Glasgow University, has been pointing out the absurdity of the application of the customs duties on silk to headbands on foreign books (first noticed, one thinks, in the Library Assistant last year), and has been finally successful in getting them remitted. As the Library Association Record very rightly points out, Mr. Cunningham has done what the profession should have done in its corporate capacity. A similar position exists with regard to Mr. Sayers' protest. It is to be hoped that the profession will not wait for a similar rebuke.

The announcement that His Majesty the King has consented to open the new Manchester and Birkenhead Public Libraries in July, following closely on the impressive ceremony at the National Central Library, cannot fail to give prestige to the library movement and satisfaction to librarians. The lavishness of the Manchester Reference Library, which will equal in this respect some of the finest public library buildings of the United States, is shown in the illustrations accompanying a descriptive article in the 16th February number of the Architect and Building News, and Manchester is to be congratulated on having tolerated the Piccadilly huts for a sufficient length of time to accumulate enough money to erect a building which will probably remain an isolated example of library magnificence.

Librarians will, however, be concerned less with the discussion and criticism aroused by its architecture than with its practicability as a library,

and the experience of Mr. Nowell and his staff now that part of the building has been opened to the public, will be watched with interest. The adoption of the circular form raised some misgiving among librarians experienced in library planning, but the architect, Mr. Vincent Harris, rather surprisingly claims, in an interview with the Manchester Guardian, that this form has practical advantages. He supports his views by the remarkable statement that it is "the form . . . of most of the great libraries in America, which I studied carefully in my four visits there." Presumably Mr. Harris has been misquoted, since no great library in America is circular. The only one which deviates from the accepted rectangular form is the Library of Congress, where the reading-room is octagonal, and in this case the remainder of the building takes the form of square wings—a very important variation from the Manchester plan.

i mes

the

naps

for

e to

uffer

test.

etter

rson

the

tion,

brary

been

lk to

TANT

s the

done

milar

t the

n the

osely

ail to The

this

hown

ruary

gratune to

emain

and

prary,

The rotunda form for the great reading-room may, as Mr. Harris claims, "reduce the staff considerably and facilitate the work of supervision," but the fact that the departmental libraries form a concentric ring around this room, with expansion possible only by moving farther round the circle, makes oversight difficult in the largest of them. It will, however, be a matter of satisfaction to public librarians that in the near future we shall have another great library building to which we can point with justifiable pride to trans-Atlantic visitors, and which we hope will set a standard, in grandeur at least, for public libraries erected in the future.

F. M. G.

"MAR"

REPLANNING LONDON'S LIBRARY SERVICE

WILLIAM A. MUNFORD

"The cultural superiority of London is largely due, not to superior municipal institutions—far from it!—but to the fact that great national art galleries and museums, libraries, and semi-official associations . . . have been founded in the metropolis. . . ." W. A. Robson, in *The Development of local government*.

T is one of the peculiarities of local government in this country that we dislike making authorities perform more than the bare minimum of essential communal services. Adoptive Acts are constantly being passed, allowing them to carry out new services and improvements, but the compulsory duties form a relatively small part of the total. This means that, whereas a

progressive authority may carry out innumerable duties and carry them out to the best advantage, another, perhaps adjacent to the first, does very little, and does it very badly. These facts account for the queer mosaic that is the English public library service. The Statistics of Urban Public Libraries in England and Wales (1931-2) are illustrative.

If the public library service of the country as a whole is a mosaic, it is a platitude to point out that the public library service of London is a chaos. . . . The metropolitan borough councils are feeble, emasculated bodies, many of the normal duties of municipal government, e.g. elementary education (this in itself accounting for a large slice of local activity), parks, fire brigade, and ambulance services among others, being performed by the London County Council, while still more control is exercised by the latter body as it approves their by-laws and raises their loans. It is not overstating the case to say that public libraries are one of the few services performed by the metropolitan councils which can be carried out unimpeded by the L.C.C. What is the result? In a recent article in the Library Review, Mr. McColvin, himself a London librarian, stated that a really efficient service can be provided for an annual cost per head of population of half a crown or 3s. Since only two London boroughs, including his own, spend more than half a crown, twelve spend less than 15. 6d., while three still spend less than 15., and St. Pancras the widow's mite of 7d., it is a logical deduction that the whole of London is not getting adequate service.

So much useful information concerning the London libraries is contained in the statistics referred to above that I propose to examine them in considerable detail and append an abstract.

First rate-cost. This ranges from the halfpenny rate of Holborn, St. Marylebone, and Westminster to the 4.6d. of Poplar. More than half the twenty-eight boroughs spend less than 2d. A low rate is not necessarily indicative of a poor service, since the rateable value of some of the boroughs is tremendously high, but this is usually the case.

Total annual expenditure ranges from the £4,216 of Stoke Newington to the £23,753 of Westminster, and many of the totals are disgracefully low. Seven boroughs have populations of between 100,000 and 150,000, and their total expenditures vary between £7,567 and £23,753, giving examples of glaring discrepancies.

Out of these not very creditable annual expenditures, almost incredibly low percentages are frequently spent on books and binding. Twelve boroughs

spend less than 20 per cent. Southwark has succeeded in reaching the figure II·7, Bermondsey 12·6, and Deptford 15·0, while Battersea with 16·4 and Hampstead with 16·3 are hard at their heels. At the other end of the scale Wandsworth spends 30·6 per cent and nine other authorities spend more than 25 per cent.

to

nd

sh

nd

a

of

in

nd

aty

ves

hat

tan

the

If a

an

wo

elve

cras

n is

d in

able

St.

the

arily

ughs

n to

low.

their

es of

dibly

oughs

The London reading public is served by systems of from one to eight libraries. Single libraries, apart from delivery stations, exist in Bethnal Green with a population of 108,194 (143 per acre), Chelsea with 59,031 (89 per acre), Finsbury with 69,888 (119 per acre), Holborn with 38,860 (96 per acre), St. Marylebone with 97,627 (61 per acre), and Stoke Newington with 51,208 (59 per acre). It is difficult to criticize fundamentally, as acreage has to be correlated with density of population and overcrowding, which vary immensely over the whole L.C.C. area, and even within borough boundaries, but it cannot be claimed that all these boroughs are "compact and comfortable" areas whose library needs are fully met. Dividing population by the number of separate libraries we find that, whereas 17,789 people are served by each Hampstead library, in Islington the figure is 80,449 and in St. Pancras 99,067.

The statistics quoted above emphasize the great diversity of provision and facilities existing in London. A person living in one street may be able to obtain service which is many times as efficient as that received by another citizen a few roads away. This state of affairs is, of course, not peculiar to London, but it is particularly noteworthy in the capital city.

The public response to the service provided is as interesting as the service. The percentage of borrowers to population is 8.6 in Kensington and 25.7 in Hampstead; twenty-five of the twenty-eight boroughs have below 20 per cent., and three less than 10 per cent., namely, Kensington, St. Pancras, and Shore-ditch. Annual issues per head of population range from 2.1 in St. Pancras to 9.7 in Woolwich. Eleven library systems issue less than 5 books per head. This is a disappointing response to forty years of activity since the consolidating Public Libraries Act, but is it remarkable in view of the service?

I am well aware that there are numerous factors which cut across a bald statistical examination of this nature, such as extensive use of circulating libraries on the one side of society, while ghastly housing conditions on the other discourage indoor occupations, including reading, but strong tendencies can be perceived. I would suggest that the fact that a library system in 1934 has less than 10 per cent, of its population as borrowers is ample reason for a public investigation.

The writer sees in nationalization, with compulsory minimum standards of service, and inspection in order to ensure that these standards are enforced, the only way out of the slough of despond in which the movement is firmly embedded. Quite apart from any other feature, the fact that English people are brought up on national minimum educational standards, poor as these are, to the age of 14 or 16, and are then obliged to take what is offered by the parish pump, is illogical and wasteful enough. The surprising fact that some library services are passably efficient is no excuse for the others. How will nationalization apply to London?

First of all, quite apart from Government control, the old autonomy of the London boroughs must go. If a recent report in the Manchester Guardian is correct, proposals for a drastic redrafting of London boundaries, and a grouping into less than ten larger areas, are receiving attention in high places. If this takes place, it will help considerably in replanning the area. From the viewpoint of efficiency an ad hoc Library Board would no doubt be best. But since libraries are not, and ought to be, a basic factor in public education, control by the L.C.C. is the obvious conclusion. As in addition the boundaries of the county area may also be modified, more than twenty-eight library systems might be ultimately amalgamated. I would envisage the appointment of a chief librarian responsible to the L.C.C., with an office staff and district librarians for the several large areas in which London is likely to be divided.

The advantages of centralizing the London library service are innumerable, and certain major improvements can be discussed.

First, even rating. It is grossly unfair that Poplar should need to spend a 4.6d. rate to get the service she requires, while six other boroughs pay less than 1d., in several cases at the cost of efficiency. A 1d. rate over the whole L.C.C. area produces over £200,000, indicating that the present annual library expenditure could be raised by a rate of approximately 1.6d., while a flat rate of 2d., surely not excessive in these days, would allow of rapid improvement of stock and facilities. Secondly, the area would be planned as a whole, and each Londoner would have first-class and equal facilities. This would make possible the creation of a small number of really efficient reference libraries, comparable with those of the great provincial cities, in place of the small institutions run by each borough.

Then book-selection. Senseless duplication of titles, as at present takes place, would be unnecessary, and the real value of the £70,000 now annually spent on books and binding by the twenty-eight boroughs would be almost

Issues per head of population.	5.	9.1	4.3	4.5		4.3	9.	4.4	4.	5.5	1.	**	5.8		5.4	0.9	0.9	4.0	.2	0.5	I.	3.0	4.5	0.	4.4	8.9	4.8	1.6
	5	4	4	4	2	4	3	4	9	~	4	9	~	4	24	5	5	4	~	~	10	in	4	9	4	Ó	00	6
Percentage of readers to popula- tion.	14.2	14.3	12.5	12.6	13.5	16.5	12.6	15.6	22.I	19.2	5.11	25.7	12.5	16.7	9.8	6.11	13.5	15.5	16.5	1.51	0.6	6.5	I.II	12.7	10.8	18.0	18.8	24.3
Number of people served by each library.	\$3,184	37,181	108,194	41,882	180,031	35,630	888,69	\$0,309	25,231	53,833	27,105	17,789	38,860	80,449	60,226	49,358	36,659	72,462	25,848	97,627	190,66	48,521	34,339	45,048	\$1,208	44,139	25,916	29,376
Number of separate libraries.*	80	00	++	. 9	H	80	н	80	4	4	8	~	н	4	80	9	9	61	9	H	24	61	8	8	H	00	2	2
Percentage of total expendi- ture spent on books and bind- ing.	16.4	12.6	25.8	22.0	17.2	15.0	27.7	26.0	59.92	26.8	17.3	16.3	6.91	22.6	1.61	23.6	20.5	20.3	17.2	27.8	27.9	19.2	L.II	25.8	17.4	30.08	24.3	25.8
Population per acre.	69	74	143	26	89	89	611	00	26	65	65	39	96	104	4	7.1	31	107	67	61	74	146	147	128	89	00	52	91
Annual expenditure on books and bind- ing.	2,191	1,467	2,211	2,652	926	1,300	1,356	1,945	3,0275	3,200	1,582	2,230	611	3,138	2,025	3,700	2,394	1.534	2,393	2,056	1,657	I,SIO	1,495	5,750	735	6,221	5,775	4,278
Amount spent per head of population.	00 H	2 I	1 7	II	OI I	00 H	I 5	0 1	2 3	II	1 4	3 I	OI I	OI	1 2	II	I	II	OI I	9 I	7	1 7	9 1	2 0	00 M	1 2	3	2 3
Total lib- rary annual expendi- ture.	13,355	11,640	8,559	11,617	\$,391	8,745	4,903	7,495	11,376	12,086	9,130	13,685	3,625	13,881	10,584	15,689	11,655	7,567	13,908	7,386	5,938	7,850	12,855	22,28I	4,216	20,279	23,753	16,547
Library rate.	5.6	3.4	3.6	5.0	1.2	3.0	\$8.0	1.5	2.7	6.1	6.1	2.5	5.0	1.5	6.0	8.1	1.4	0.1	9.4	5.0	9.0	2.5	2.3	3.0	2.5	9.1	5.0	3.6
						٠					۰														no			
Borough.	Battersea .	Bermondsey	Bethnal Green	Camberwell	Chelsea .	Deptford .	Finsbury .	Fulham .	Greenwich	Hackney .	Hammersmith	Hampstead	Holporn .	Islington .	Kensington	Lambeth .	Lewisham	Paddington	Poplar .	St. Marylebone	St. Pancras	Shoreditch	Southwark	Stepney .	Stoke Newington	Wandsworth	Westminster	Woolwich.

of

mare to ish ary

the is ing his ew-

less ole ary ate ent and ake ies, nall

kes ally ost Total expenditure, £315,996. Total expenditure on books and binding, £69,359. Average percentage of income spent on books and binding, 22'0.

6 Excluding delivery stations. † Population divided by sumber of separate libraries.

‡ White-paper figure incorrect.

incalculably increased. Over and above the question of duplication would come the planning of stock to ensure that every book of importance was added. Economies in the time spent in cataloguing and classification and the resulting scope for additional really creative work, plus the obviously firm basis for central cataloguing on the lines of the Library of Congress scheme, are resulting developments. The London Union catalogue, now well in hand, would obviously be invaluable as a starting-point in building up one efficient stock instead of twenty-eight compromises. Is it not a melancholy thought that twenty-eight cataloguers deal with hundreds of the same ephemeral books every year? The adoption of staff salary scales and conditions for the whole of the area, as applying to L.C.C. employees, would end once and for all the anomalies now existing.

The twenty-eight public libraries of London differ in every conceivable respect, whether it be staff salaries, adequacy of public facilities, or quality of book-stock. They spend nearly a third of a million pounds annually, and the ratepayer gets very inadequate value for his money. The library service of the whole country needs to be planned on National lines, and the White-paper Statistics used suggest that a better starting-point than London would not be easy to find.

THE AMERICAN SCENE

RALPH A. ULVELING

POR more than a year nation-wide interest has focused on the relative prerogatives of business as opposed to those of government. Aggrieved commercial interests have deplored with charges of "interference" the civil efforts to regulate for purposes of "social good" what had for years been deemed the field of unrestricted competitive enterprise.

Discussion of the duplicating services provided by public libraries and commercial rental libraries is by no reasoning akin to the discussions referred to above. Lending of books for home use, whether for educational or recreational reading, is traditionally a function of the public library. Therefore, without fear of trespassing, and with no selfish thought of forcing out of existence the public institution's profit-making counterpart, I propose to discuss

librarians' aims and responsibilities, pointing to the commercial organizations only as a factor in lessening the sphere of influence of public libraries.

ald

vas the

rm

are

nd,

ent ght

oks

ole

the

able

y of

the

the

aper

E be

NG

ative

eved

" the

years

com-

ed to

crea-

efore,

exist-

iscuss

One need survey the commercial development in only the most cursory manner to realize that this is a parallel growth of no small magnitude. Briefly summarized, we find metropolitan department stores devoting entire sections with full-time staffs to the renting of books. In our large cities energetic corporations have created vast chains of these book distribution centres, while individual initiative has completed the dotting of urban communities with smaller libraries in drug-stores, book-stores, apartment hotels, clubs, and gift shops. Criticism cannot be levelled at these commercial ventures, for they stand merely on the unquestioned right of profit-making organizations to sweep into their lawful undertakings all activities not proscribed by statute. Librarians, however, may not be so leniently dealt with.

Recognizing, as anyone must, that the field of service entered by these commercial organizations is largely that of recreational reading, the clouded fiction policy of public libraries appears to be responsible for giving impetus to this auxiliary growth. Despite the rivers of ink which have been spread over the subject of fiction, we have failed to state finally and positively whether a public library's function is to be educational or recreational or both.

From the tenor of talk at our professional gatherings, one suspects that librarians have become alarmed by the size of fiction statistics, and that in trying to control the pendulum swing we have gone to unjustifiable lengths in our efforts to tear down these fiction counts. In fact, it has become a vogue to boast of decreases in percentage of fiction drawn for home reading.

A broad social-service view will, however, give us ground for questioning such action. Is there not a grain of truth in the statement of one distinguished librarian "that in avoiding the merely trivial, librarians may put too much emphasis on information, too little on inspiration"? What thinking librarian will esteem the parrot-like recitation of the dates of Philip V's reign, or the recounting of excavations in the Valley of the Euphrates more highly than the bringing to a groping reader a philosophy of living gleaned from the social discourses in our modern novel? Or, bringing the problem to its simplest aspects, who can begrudge the mental relief given at public expense to a victim of the industrial collapse who seeks merely to escape the discouraging facts round about?

Will a very selective fiction-buying policy, based on high standards of

literary merit, such as is now being advocated, protect public libraries from the expense of questionable effort and preserve all of the socially useful functions they should perform?

Viewing this buying programme from its most disputed angle, where may the lines be drawn between what is worth while and what is frivolous? The definition of what is recreational becomes a matter finally of the librarian's temperament and philosophy. For a clientele that ranges from the least privileged educationally to the scholar, it is difficult to fix within narrow limits a standard which will give to each reader the subjective reaction which high-minded librarians may set out to do. In other words, the book which is selected for this purpose, in one pair of hands is a mental challenge, while in another is simple diversion. So long as this span of capacity persists among our patrons, a heavy emphasis on restriction in titles tends to give a scant service to one and a broad service to the other. What a paradoxical condition in the most democratic institution of a democratic state!

For discussion purposes let us assume that the public library has only an educational obligation to the citizenry that supports it. What will be the effect of a limited fiction-buying programme on the adolescent? Forced in these formative years to restrict his reading to the classics, with excursions into the twentieth century only by way of Lagerlof, Dreiser, and Hardy, will the developing mind ever have opportunity to develop the critical faculty necessary to separate the grain from the chaff? I question it. Further, the products of such a library association may well be grouped with the students referred to in a recent stricture on American colleges by the President of the University of Illinois, Arthur Cutts Willard, who said, "The average college graduate . . . has been prepared for everything but life."

Conscious of the fact that the spenders of public money must invest their funds in a manner calculated to provide the greatest return, we must consider the cost of our book acquisitions. Six or eight dollars spent for a title which may be read only a few times may produce far less in community good than three or four less cherished novels which are read till the pages are tattered.

These defences of popular fiction are probably hackneyed. Nevertheless, they are reiterated in the hope that the growing tendency towards reduction of fiction titles may be considered thoroughly before services which are now a part of a public library's structure are surrendered to the less social-minded profittakers.

That I may not be accused of imputing to librarians a book-buying tendency which does not exist, let me quote figures cited in Mr. R. L. Duffus' recent book, Our starving libraries. One large library, which has been an aggressive exponent of reduction of titles with increase in number of copies of those purchased, is shown to have added only 173 new titles in 1930, its last year of normal book buying. These were the cullings from an available list of new fiction publications totalling somewhat more than 1,000. Another much smaller but nevertheless important institution shows a reduction from 309 in 1930 to 90 in 1933. A third library reduced from 711 titles "at the height of the boom," probably 1929, to 250 in 1933. In fairness to the head of this institution, it should be stated that this reduction was perhaps less a matter of principle than of necessity, as the qualifying remark is made that that library's fiction buying was reduced only in proportion to reductions in other fields of literature. A fourth library reports 461 new titles for 1929 as against 250 in 1933.

he

ns

ay he

n's

ast

its

gh-

is

ong

ice

the

an

the

l in

ons

will

ulty

the

ents

lege

heir

sider

hich

good

are

eless,

on of

part

rofit-

It was during these years when public library restrictions were increasing that the commercial library became a factor to be reckoned with. A defection of patrons from public libraries has now become manifest. Very properly we may question whether high ideals will defeat our ends. By allowing any substantial group to lose confidence in the public library's ability to supply diverting books, are we not losing contact entirely with a group who should vary recreational reading with more substantial fare? Do we not have a responsibility to foster in the public mind a confidence that wholesome reading, of whatever character, may be obtained from our publicly supported archives? Or, may we justly leave to commercial libraries, whose inclusions are dictated by factors making for a widespread appeal, that part of our work not definitely labelled educational?

I well realize that the administrators who encourage this tendency towards ultra selectiveness have backgrounds covering years of experience which cannot be lightly brushed aside. Nevertheless, I am convinced that a policy which tends to divorce large groups from public library service is weakening our whole structure, and that the principle of making readers either take high hurdles to obtain service or stay behind and be cared for by those who may have undesirable standards, is socially unsound. By thus limiting our service to the few, we definitely contravene a democratic educational principle that has been a foundation-stone in our national life, Signs of the failure of such a policy have already been made manifest. Will we now have the courage to retrace our steps before it is too late to change the course?

The Library Assistant THE DIVISIONS

MIDLAND DIVISION

DISCUSSION on the syllabus of the professional examinations was held at the Acock's Green Library, Birmingham, on Wednesday, 21st March, under the auspices of the Joint Committee of the Birmingham and District Branch of the Library Association and the Midland Division of the Association of Assistant Librarians.

In opening the discussion, Mr. T. C. Kemp (Birmingham Public Libraries) stated that the syllabus demanded from the student a standard of preparation to which the Association itself never aspired in its actual examinations. The condition that candidates for the Intermediate certificate must pass in both subjects at one examination was an imposition of penalty, for it was penalising a candidate to nullify his pass in cataloguing because he had failed in classification.

The succeeding discussion centred mainly round Mr. Kemp's criticism of the Intermediate examination, and the following resolution was carried: That this joint meeting asks the Education Committee of the Library Association so to amend the regulations governing the Intermediate examination that candidates who sit for the whole examination and pass in one subject only be allowed to complete the examination by passing in the remaining subject at one of the two examinations immediately following the first successful sitting.

SOUTH WALES AND MONMOUTHSHIRE DIVISION

Wednesday, 28th March, was a red-letter day in the history of the South Wales Division of the Association of Assistant Librarians, when the Division was honoured by an official visit from the President of the Association, Miss E. M. Exley, F.L.A., of the St. Marylebone Public Library. This was the first occasion on which the Division has been so honoured since its inception.

The meeting was held at Cardiff, and after visiting the civic buildings, the National Museum, and two of the latest branch libraries in the afternoon, the President addressed an evening meeting of the members at the Central Library, on "Possibilities of progress." Miss Exley was introduced by Mr. G. C. Poole, F.L.A., Chairman of the Division, and in the course of a brilliant and highly stimulating address she touched upon many aspects of modern ideals of library service and creative librarianship.

The address was followed by a spirited discussion, which was summed up

by Mr. Harry Farr, F.L.A., the City Librarian. A highly successful meeting concluded with an entertainment arranged and carried out (in honour of the President of the Association) by the women members of the Association.

NEW MEMBERS

was 21st

the

ries)

tion

The

ooth

sing

sifi-

n of

ed:

cia-

tion

only

ject

ing.

sion Miss

the

the

the

ary,

C.

and

ls of

l up

R. ANDREWS (Bristol); Jean Balmer (Appleby); Kathleen M. Brawn (Torquay); Joyce M. O. Smith (Kingston); Wilfred A. Stockwell (Twickenham); R. W. Stone (Southwark); W. E. Tidy (Southall).

Eastern .- Mildred M. Algar (Norwich).

Midland.—A. Boodson (Birmingham University); Misses A. M. Douglas, D. C. Hewitt, O. W. A. James, Mr. B. Johnson, Misses E. M. Purdy, C. Sturman, K. D. Tudor (Birmingham); Miss M. Humberstone (Worcester County); Penelope L. Morgan, S. E. Graham-Smith (Cheltenham); Miss J. M. Sharratt (Longton).

North-Eastern.—Robert M. Gray, Thomas E. Lee, Hilda A. Lewis (Wallsend).
North-Western.—Stanley Birchall (Leigh); Misses W. Chadwick, J. M. Chorlton, D. Dane, D. Doke, C. Eckersley, G. E. Gange, I. Gerdes, K. Nuttall, J. Shasby, K. Stevens, K. Walker, F. Wharton; Messrs. Eric A. Clough, G. M. Draper, D. D. Haslam, G. F. Herriman, T. H. Howle, V. Livesey, G. Papadopulos, D. A. South, I. Wallman, J. E. Wild (Manchester).

South-Western .- Violet I. Rice (University College, Southampton).

COUNCIL NOTES

T the last Council Meeting, the Programme Committee considered meetings for the next session, and it was recommended that three joint meetings be held with the London and Home Counties Branch. A special committee to consider social arrangements was set up, and a project made for the formation of Debating and Dramatic Societies.

The Editor reported that the supplement to Mr. Hewitt's *Library law* was now printed, and that the author catalogue of the library would be available in a few week's time.

The Education Secretary reported that 52 per cent. of the students taking

courses in December 1933 had passed, compared with a general average of 45 per cent. The question of revision courses was considered, and remitted to the Education Secretary for report. Co-operation with the NALGO scholarship scheme had been effected by the Library Association.

The speakers and subjects for the A.A.L. Sessions at the coming Conference were considered, and the final arrangements were as follows:

- "Library publicity." Speaker: Mr. G. P. Jackson. Opener: Mr. W. C. Pugsley.
- "Professional literature: a critical survey." Speaker: Mr. F. Seymour Smith. Opener: Mr. L. Chubb.

Reports on the Library Association Council were submitted, and it was noted with satisfaction that action with regard to backward authorities was now in progress through the medium of a standing committee on service conditions.

W. B. S.

~24.50

CORRESPONDENCE

Public Library and Museum, Colne,

THE HON. EDITOR,
THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

LANCASHIRE.

DEAR SIR,-

In a circular letter issued recently to chief librarians, the Secretary of the Library Association appeals to them to endeavour to persuade members of their staffs who do not possess matriculation or similar educational certificates to sit for a preliminary examination partly written and partly oral. The fees to be charged are ξt 15. for each part of the examination.

I agree with the scheme as a whole, but consider that the fees are exorbitant, and will defeat the object of the Library Association.

It will be difficult to persuade library assistants, with their usual princely salaries, to regard the scheme with enthusiasm, particularly in the present overcrowded state of the profession.

Surely the Association has no need to save every penny.

Yours faithfully,

J. H. E. Biggs,

Librarian.

LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1.

THE HON. EDITOR,
THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

DEAR SIR,-

45

to

ar-

ice

fr.

F.

vas

vas

ice

he

eir

sit

be

nt,

elv

ent

Perhaps I may be allowed to comment on the survey of library cooperation contributed by Mr. Burgess to your March issue. The thought which Mr. Burgess has put into his article is a welcome change from the illdigested criticism which has featured in previous numbers.

His thesis may be summed up as follows: "If you limit the scope of the loans, will librarians get their money's worth? Alternatively, if you widen it, won't the larger libraries eventually object and withdraw their support?" One cannot doubt that either of these policies carried to extremes would have the effect he forecasts. Nevertheless, I am convinced the dangers are more apparent than real.

It is a curious fact that while the Northern Region has operated perfectly harmoniously for over three years, all the criticism and gloomy prophecies of tribulation have come from outside the area, and not from within. One naturally anticipates fresh problems as the system develops, but I think Mr. Burgess's argument (so far as it concerns the Northern System) may be met by my statement that the Northern Bureau has received no complaint derived from the scope of the system from any library.

While I appreciate Mr. Burgess's view-point, I feel it would be a great mistake for any Regional Committee to define the scope of the system too rigidly. His difficulty in defining a "textbook," for example, will illustrate the danger of attempting to set down a hard-and-fast rule: there are inevitably border-line cases, and a border-line case means friction with the Bureau. The following types of book are understood to be outside the scope of the Northern System: fiction, current issues of periodicals, year-books, directories, etc., and recent popular books. This moderate and obvious delimitation has never been the subject of a formal resolution or official pronouncement, but is accepted as a reasonable general definition of the types of book which no librarian would wish to lend or would expect a colleague to lend.

There is one inaccuracy in Mr. Burgess's article I should like to correct. I am quoted as stating that if a librarian sanctions an unreasonable loan, it concerns the local ratepayers, the Committee, and the librarian and nobody else.

What I said was, a decision on the question of lending reference books is a purely domestic matter. The distinction need not be elaborated.

And a final word on Mr. Burgess's statistics. One must admire his industry and honest intentions in attempting to estimate the value of the services rendered to the fourteen libraries in the Northern Region assessed at figures ranging from £10 to £30. His inaccurate identification of the libraries, however, has been made rather surprisingly without approaching this Bureau for the correct information, with the result that his calculations must not be accepted.

Yours faithfully,

M. C. POTTINGER,

Hon. Secretary and Treasurer.

(This letter has been slightly abridged.-Ed.)

THE EDITOR,
THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

DEAR SIR,-

You have kindly permitted me to make a short reply to the criticisms of my first letter. May I say at the beginning how sorry I am to disappoint Mr. Miller. It is true, but unfortunate, that I am of mature age. But I can confidently assure him, on the unimpeachable authority of my wife, that I am not of the female sex. Incidentally, I presume, this confession will nullify his final remark, that I must be a delightful person to know. The pole's-length away he would keep me, I am afraid, will now extend to the distance of the geographical Poles. Both Mr. Miller and Mr. Callander worship the mighty (in deference to them I almost wrote Almighty) God of Reason with a sublime and simple faith. I have yet to learn that reason is an infallible guide. So many conclusions based on reason have been found to be false that new conclusions have been substituted, and finality has never been achieved. Walter Lippmann says, " A man must believe that reason will give him the truth, but he must not believe too strongly that he has the truth when he has reasoned it out." That is only "by the way," or possibly "in the way." To come to one of the chief points of the controversy, the use of sentimentality as a guiding factor in life, Mr. Callander says Cry havoc as a condemnation of war is less effective to the man of reason than The Science of peace or War unless. I should have thought there would be no necessity to appeal to the man of reason if Mr. Callander's god is so effective. The futility of war to him should have been already ap-130

parent. It is the man without reason who requires some other kind of appeal, and that is where *Cry havoc* would penetrate deeper than the other books. It is the results that count. I have had an unaccountable fear and doubt of men of reason since the war. The reason of one man is the unreason of another.

S

ř

e

of

r,

n-

ot

al

ay

0-

ty

ne

So

n-

er

he t." he in

to

ht

r's

p-

I object strongly to the suggestion that a library should cater only for those who are willing to use their brains. That is a new doctrine difficult to reconcile with the rights of citizenship. I must leave it at that, as I have not the space allowed me to supply the many analogies which will immediately occur to your readers. At any rate it points to my original charge of the superior attitude adopted by those willing to use their brains towards those who are not. My illogical mind (vide Mr. Miller) assumes a public library quite as necessary to the latter as the former, if only to teach them to think. If I have done an injustice to Mr. Callander in asserting that truth appears to him to be nothing but the disagreeable and horrible things of life, I tender my apologies. I can only urge in extenuation that I have heard him speak on two or three occasions only, and that I judged him on what he left unsaid. "What I have said, I have said," was the saying of a famous statesman, and I came to the conclusion that Mr. Callander had reversed it and decided that "what I have not said, I do not intend to say." Mr. Callander is averse from complicating the problems of book selection by intruding his personal philosophy; but the whole tenor of his wide "open reply "bears witness that he is unable to prevent it from doing so. I can sympathize with his desire for a more worthy use of libraries, but until the culture of the man in the street (the woman in the street for Mr. Miller), as representing public opinion, and whose servants we are compelled to be, has risen to a higher stage, our standards must conform mainly to theirs. The question resolves itself into the age-long controversy whether the public, paying the piper, should call the tune (mostly jazz), or whether we, the paid pipers, should give them grand opera. There is no answer except yes and no.

Yours.

VERDANT.

A. M. HALDANE SUPPLY CO.

Public Libraries and County Libraries Supplied Promptly with New Books and Remainders

4 CARLTON STREET, LOWER REGENT STREET, LONDON
Tologopous and Tolographic Address: WHITEHALL 6385 LONDON



W. H. SMITH & SON LIBRARY SALES DEPARTMENT

YOU are invited to visit our Showroom at Strand House, and inspect our wide selection of recent Travel, Biography, Miscellaneous Literature, and Fiction.

W. H. SMITH & SON

LIBRARY DEPARTMENT, Strand House, Portugal St., London, W.C.2 Library Showroom (Entrance "B") Telephone No. Holborn 4343

Head Office: W. H. Smith & Son, Ltd., Strand House, W.C.2



FOR SALE

Apply:

THE HON. EDITOR

KENSAL RISE LIBRARY LONDON, N.W.10

G. BLUNT & SONS, LTD.



For the latest developments in LIBRARY REBINDING by the "Ideal" Guarded Every Leaf Process

THE FACSIMILE PUBLISHERS' BINDING

which is now so famous—over 1,600 bindings in stock—at 1/11 per volume, Cr. 8vo.

Lists of these bindings are issued and sent to all Libraries

Our book department also issues lists of books bound in this and other attractive styles at "Economy" prices

Visits from Public Librarians and Assistants welcomed to our works and shoursoms

NORTH ACTON ROAD, HARLESDEN, LONDON, N.W.10